Critical Think Piece

Improving Study Issue Management Throughout the Planning Process

Final Presentation

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Agenda

- Initial Topic/Individual Work
- Combined Problem
- Findings
- Recommendations

Initial Topic-Policy Clarification

- How can we reduce problems that stem from policy issues?

- We have gray policies that are often interpreted and applied inconsistently

- Original focus on clarifying policy
  - ►Acknowledging that gray policy will always exist, shifted toward process

Initial Topic-VT Collaboration

- How can we improve inefficient decision making?
- Inconsistent policy interpretations hamper progress
- Policy gray areas provide flexibility
- Topic shifted to issue resolution

Dry Run

- Sparked debate and reinforced the need for additional awareness and support
  - ▶ No one solution, but clearly more is needed
- Are there additional tools or resources that can help the entire VT manage process better?
- Combine topics to produce more consistent, comprehensive product

Overarching Problem

- There is a clear need for improvement, especially with 3x3 pressures
- The third 3?

Complex Problems

Gray Policies

Tight Schedules
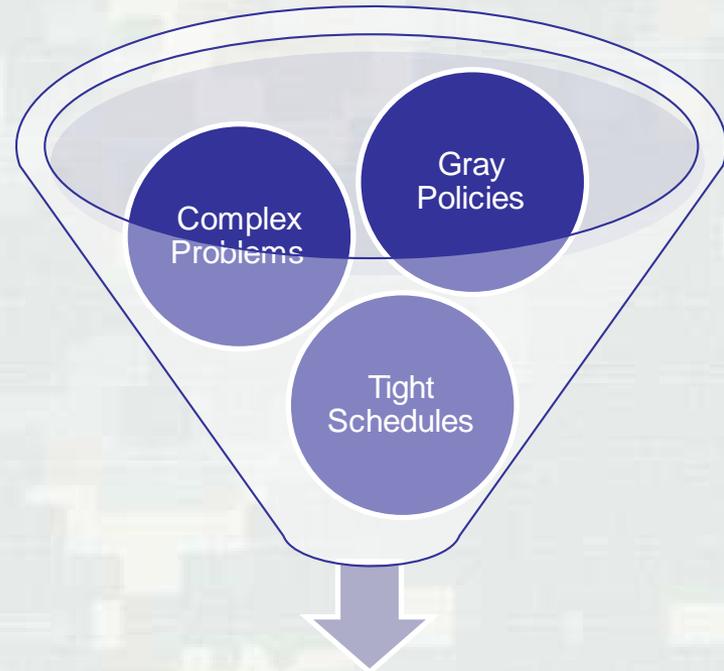
Need for Efficient Issue Management

Conclusions

- Areas of need
  - ▶ Awareness
  - ▶ Roles and responsibilities
  - ▶ Effective use of tools
  - ▶ Best practices
- How can we address these needs?
  - ▶ Additional resource
  - ▶ Take action

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Guide for Study Issue Management

- Resource to help teams identify, communicate, and resolve study issues more efficiently
- Describes when and how to use Planning tools
- Clarifies roles and responsibilities
- Raises awareness of additional resources and processes, such as IRCs
- Centralized portal for issue management

SMART Guide

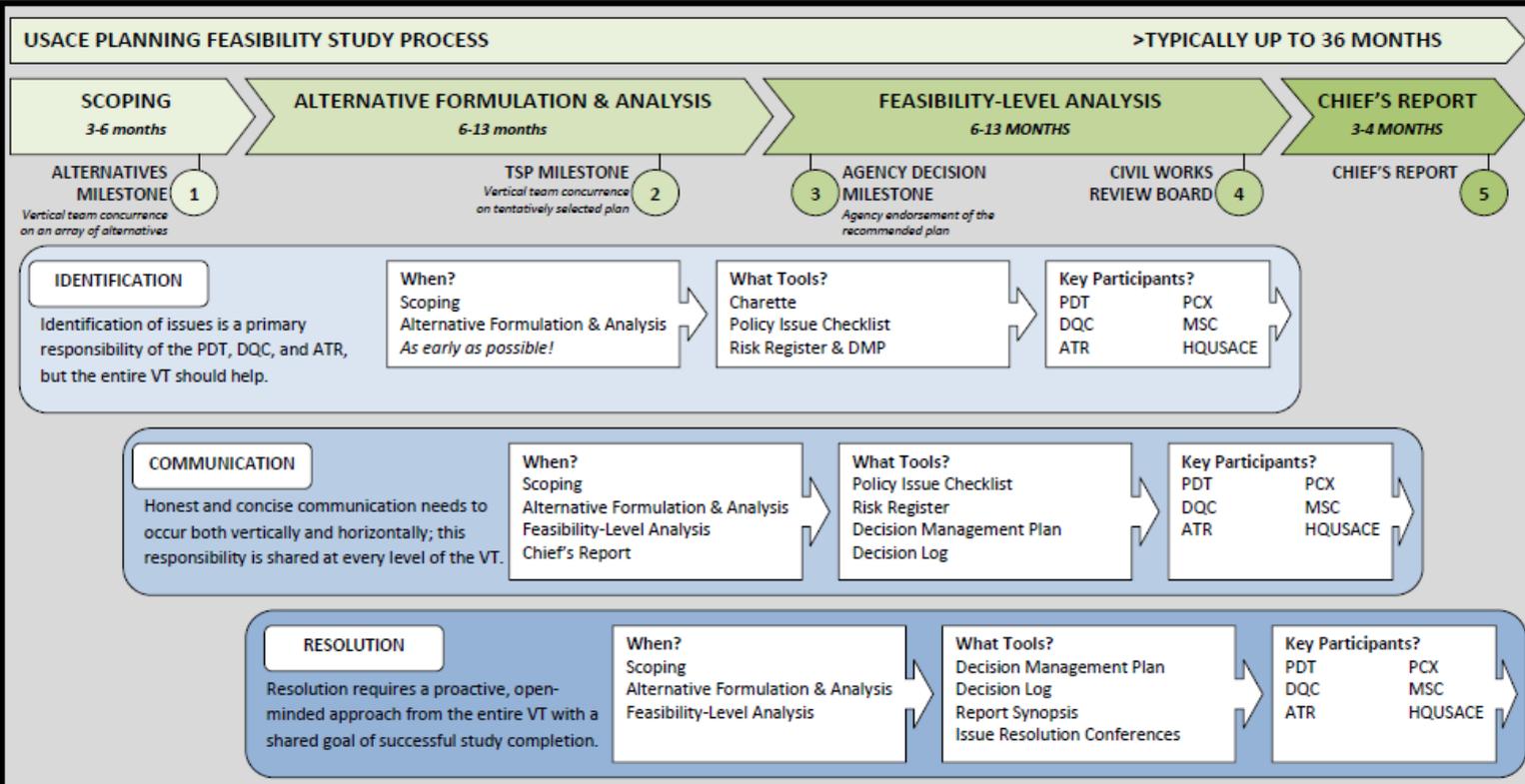## Issue Identification, Communication, and Resolution

Why should we identify and communicate issues early?
Policy issues are commonplace in USACE planning. Without proper attention, these issues can hinder our ability to deliver on our commitments.

Who is responsible for identifying, communicating, and resolving issues?
The entire vertical team must be proactive in managing issues; there is a shared responsibility to ensure all major study issues are resolved before the final report is submitted.

How is this effective issue management accomplished?
Planning has many tools for issue identification, communication, and resolution. Know them and use them!

When should you communicate?
Early and often. Planning Charettes, IPRs, IRCs, and Milestones are great places to start, but don't forget about informal contact.

What does resolution look like?
Resolution should be seen as an acceptable path forward that benefits the project stakeholders. The resolution may be a course change, but should be focused on solutions that can be implemented.

USACE PLANNING FEASIBILITY STUDY PROCESS — >TYPICALLY UP TO 36 MONTHS

SCOPING — 3-6 months
ALTERNATIVE FORMULATION & ANALYSIS — 6-13 months
FEASIBILITY-LEVEL ANALYSIS — 6-13 MONTHS
CHIEF'S REPORT — 3-4 MONTHS

ALTERNATIVES MILESTONE (1) — *Vertical team concurrence on an array of alternatives*
TSP MILESTONE (2) — *Vertical team concurrence on tentatively selected plan*
AGENCY DECISION MILESTONE (3) — *Agency endorsement of the recommended plan*
CIVIL WORKS REVIEW BOARD (4)
CHIEF'S REPORT (5)

IDENTIFICATION
Identification of issues is a primary responsibility of the PDT, DQC, and ATR, but the entire VT should help.

When?
Scoping
Alternative Formulation & Analysis
As early as possible!

What Tools?
Charette
Policy Issue Checklist
Risk Register & DMP

Key Participants?
PDT   PCX
DQC   MSC
ATR   HQUSACE

COMMUNICATION
Honest and concise communication needs to occur both vertically and horizontally; this responsibility is shared at every level of the VT.

When?
Scoping
Alternative Formulation & Analysis
Feasibility-Level Analysis
Chief's Report

What Tools?
Policy Issue Checklist
Risk Register
Decision Management Plan
Decision Log

Key Participants?
PDT   PCX
DQC   MSC
ATR   HQUSACE

RESOLUTION
Resolution requires a proactive, open-minded approach from the entire VT with a shared goal of successful study completion.

When?
Scoping
Alternative Formulation & Analysis
Feasibility-Level Analysis

What Tools?
Decision Management Plan
Decision Log
Report Synopsis
Issue Resolution Conferences

Key Participants?
PDT   PCX
DQC   MSC
ATR   HQUSACE

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PDT – The PDT should initiate conversations as early as possible, be open and honest, and provide recommended paths forward on potential issues.

MSC – The MSC should provide senior level insight into whether or not issues should be elevated further through their QA role. The MSC should act as a host for any policy based IRCs.

PCX – The PCXs have a consulting role in policy and technical issues and should be actively involved with scoping complicated studies.

HQ/RIT – The RIT should help share lessons learned between teams and provide insight into common issues and Washington-level perspectives.

MOVING BEYOND PLANNING MODERNIZATION: CHANGING CULTURE

PDTs should be well versed in policy and guidance and not expect to be told what to do, while the VT should be willing to accept some risk in providing clear guidance and resolution on policy questions.

Planning should focus on overcoming issues to make sound, defensible study recommendations. We need to move beyond the perceived culture of "No."

Culture change will require time and effort, but will result in better, more comprehensive solutions for our nation's water resource challenges.

Recommendations

- Finalize Guide
  - ► Incorporate new or updated tools, resources, etc.
  - ► Input from PCoP, PCXs
- List of common policy issues by mission area (PCXs)
- Central site for lessons learned
- Ongoing efforts: complete business line-specific DMPs and update Study Issue Checklist

Recommendations *cont.*

- Once tools are developed or updated, provide training and education
  - ► Awareness
  - ► Understanding
- Training Modules
  - ► Planning Essentials
  - ► PCoP Webinar
  - ► Planning Associates

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